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Topic: Aurangzeb and his Imperialistic Policy

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Content:

1. Aurangzeb and Imperialism
2. Asam
3. Deccan
3. North West Frontier
4. Marathas
5. Administration, and Religious Policy
6. Success and Failures of Mughals

Mughal Empire: Aurangzeb (1658-1707):

We know that Aurangzeb had enthroned himself on July 21 1658 after his occupation of Agra. But he held his second enthronement after his success in the **battles of Khajwa and Deorai, on May 15, 1659** after entering Delhi in a grand procession.

There were prolonged rejoicings, and lavish expenditure was incurred to make the

occasion memorable. There were large-scale illuminations and grand feasts. Khutba was read and coins struck in his name. He assumed the title of Alamgir Padshah Ghazi.

Aurangzeb's first concern was to take steps to win the confidence, particularly of his co-religionists and to alleviate the distress of the common people who had suffered considerably due to the war of succession and loss of production of every kind. He discontinued the Ilahi era introduced by Akbar and reverted to the lunar calendar followed by the Muslims.

He remitted certain vexatious taxes and cesses, such as transit duty octroi duty, awabs which were extra levies and special awabs which were licence tax, gift tax, fees and commissions realised for the state. But as was usual with all previous rulers, these remissions were not effective in reality except in one or two cases. The local officers continued to collect all the taxes for their own benefits. According to Khafi Khan the local officers actually collected transit duties often twice the cost price of the commodities.

In order to bring peace and repair the damages done during the war of succession particularly in northern India, Aurangzeb brought the governors and officers under strict control. Aurangzeb was the champion of the Sunni Muslims and in order that he might conform to orthodox precepts of the Quran, he issued several regulations. Formerly Kalima used to be embossed on the coins. This practice was abandoned by Aurangzeb as it was un-Islamic.

He also gave up the practice of observing the Persian New Year's day. Cultivation of Bhang in the empire was prohibited, gambling, drinking and prostitution were also strictly prohibited and censors of public morals were appointed to see to it that orders were strictly obeyed.

Every Muslim was required to say prayers five times a day and keep Ramadan Fast. Heresy and blasphemy were strictly punished. Many Shiah were beheaded for abusing the first three Caliphs i.e. Khalifas. The Ismailia and Bohra communities of Gujarat had to suffer bloody persecution at the hands of Aurangzeb.

Expansion of Territories:

Imperial expansion under Aurangzeb ran apace and if the loss of Qandahar and Central Asia under Shah Jahan is not taken into account the extent of the empire remained intact under Aurangzeb at the time of the accession. Daud Khan, Governor of Bihar conquered Palamau in 1661 and it was fortunate for Aurangzeb that his enterprising officers added to the empire of their master.

Assam Campaign:

On the eastern frontier of the Empire the Ahoms, a Mongoloid dynasty that ruled over Assam and Cooch-Bihar seized the Mughal district of Kamrup that lay between their territories. Mir Jumla, the governor of Bengal was directed to advance against the Ahoms to check their aggression.

The Mughals had already to fight the Ahoms when they raided the eastern frontier of the Empire under Shah Jahan and a peace was arrived at between the two in 1639. But the war of succession gave the Ahoms the opportunity to occupy Guwahati in 1658, seize 140 horses, 40 pieces of cannon, 200 matchlocks and much booty.

Mir Jumla marched at the head of 12,000 cavalry and 30,000 infantry, a large flotilla and sufficient artillery from Dacca in 1661 to punish the aggressors. Mir Jumla rapidly overran Cooch-Bihar in December 1661 and pursued the Ahom Raja up the Brahmaputra valley. Fort after fort fell to him and Assam was also captured.

Mir Jumla entered Garhgaon, the capital of the Ahom Raja in March 1662. The Raja left the capital defenseless at the mercy of the invader and Mir Jumla collected immense booty. But with the onset of the rains Nature fought for the Ahoms. Mir Jumla's troops suffered heavily from the inclemencies of the climate and fell sick—both for want of provisions and medicines the army of Mir Jumla was in a hopeless state of disorder and confusion.

The Ahoms who had avoided open conflict with the Mughals now fell upon them. The Mughal governor despite the famine and pestilence in his camp held his own till the rains were over, and then resumed offensive in full scale. The Ahoms were now compelled to sue for peace.

Thus "judged as a military exploit, Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam was a success" (J.N. Sarkar). Jayadvaj, king of Assam agreed to pay an annual tribute to the Mughals and pay a huge indemnity, a part of which was paid immediately and the balance was to be paid in twelve equal monthly installments.

It must, however, be noted that compared to the loss sustained, particularly death of Mir Jumla (April, 10, 1663) himself on his way to Dacca due to illness caused during the Assam Campaign and loss of men and money, the gain was too insignificant and of no permanent advantage to the empire.

Mir Jumla was succeeded by Shayista Khan, son of Asaf Khan and maternal uncle of Aurangzeb, as governor of Bengal. The Portuguese at that time made themselves a

veritable menace in Bengal for they carried on piracy in coastal Bengal in the name of trade and even carried off people and sold them as slaves.

Shayista Khan raised a flotilla of 300 vessels and captured the island of Sandvip as well as Chittagong. Sandvip was the stronghold of the Portuguese pirates. Shayista Khan released thousands of slaves. Chittagong belonged to the king of Arakan, who was an ally of the Portuguese. Shayista Khan placed a commandant in charge of Chittagong to deal with evil of the Portuguese piracy, but it could not completely eradicate.

North-West Frontier War:

Aurangzeb was a champion of Muslim orthodoxy, but he had to face equally orthodox Muslim Afghan tribes in the north-west frontier of his empire who had always been a menace to the north-western borders of the empire. The Afghan tribes were hardy people who lived by high way robbery and blackmailing the rich cities of the north-western Punjab.

The Mughal emperors found it difficult to conquer or tame the tribesmen and resorted to the system of bribing them. But these tribes euphemistically called political pensions were not always effective in securing obedience. In 1667 a leader of the Yusufzai clan rose in arms and a large number of them crossed the Indus and raided the Mughal district of Hazara.

A section of the Yusufzais plundered Attock and Peshawar and attempted to hold the ferry and Harun to prevent the Mughal army to cross into the tribal areas. They were, however, defeated by the Mughal commandant Kamil Khan of Attock (April, 1667). Shamsheer Khan another Mughal commander crossed into the tribal area and defeated the Yusufzais tribals. Aurangzeb also sent Muhammad Amin Khan to punish the Yusufzais within a few months.

In 1672 another revolt in the frontier region took place under the Afridi chief Akmal Khan who declared himself independent, assumed the crown of king himself and declared a holy war against the Mughals calling upon all the Pathans to join him. In May, 1672, they inflicted a crushing defeat on the Mughals under Muhammad Amin Khan at Ah Masjid.

Amin Khan made good his escape leaving his camp and property including his women who were turned into slaves by their Pathan captors. This victory enhanced the power and prestige of Akmal Khan and recruits began to flock into his army. The success also fired the ambition of the tribesmen who were joined by Khushal Khan of the Khattak clan and the rising spread throughout the entire frontier region.

The whole of the Pathan land from Attock to Quandahar rose in arms. Aurangzeb appointed Mahabat Khan as the governor of Afghanistan with the specific instruction to put down the rebellion. The new governor arrived at a secret understanding with the rebels and there was no improvement in the situation.

Aurangzeb was very much displeased and sent Shujaat Khan supported by Jaswant Singh to deal with rebellious tribesmen. Shujaat Khan was defeated by the Pathans in February, 1674 and he himself was killed with a large number of his soldiers. The remnant of his army was rescued by the Rather contingent of Jaswant Singh.

The situation at the frontier was fast going out of control. Aurangzeb therefore personally proceeded to Hasan Abdal, (1674) a place near Peshawar and by both diplomacy, bribing and use of force achieved much success. He succeeded in bringing many Afghan tribes to submission by grant of pensions, jagirs and presents as also offices, while more recalcitrants were subdued by use of force.

By December 1675, the frontier became almost quiet and Aurangzeb left for Delhi. Amin Khan, the governor of Afghanistan was a capable man who by his tact, diplomacy and friendly behaviour towards the Afghan tribals succeeded in further quietening the frontier during the term of his office from 1677 to 1698 the year of his death. His success was to a very large extent due to the wise advice and able support of his wife Sahibji, daughter of Ali Mardan Khan.

Amin Khan while paid subsidies to the tribal chiefs sowed dissensions among them and gradually broke up the Afghan Tribal confederacy organised by Akmal Khan. On the latter's death the Afridis submitted and made peace with the Mughals. Khushal Khan, the Khattak hero, however, carried on hostilities for a few years more till his own son betrayed him and went over to the Mughals.

Khushal Khan was captured and imprisoned. The frontier war came to an end. The war against the Afghan tribals proved to be a very costly affair and as Sir J. N. Sarkar puts it; their indirect effects were prejudicial to the interests of the empire, for it was ruinous to imperial finances and even more harmful in its political effects.

It made employment of the Afghans in the ensuing hostilities with the Rajput's impossible, although Afghans were the fittest soldiers to fight in the barren country of Rajputana. It also relieved pressure on Shivaji by directing the Mughal troops from the south to service in the north-west. The advantage was taken by Shivaji who took possession of Karnataka and Raigarh.

“The Maratha chief took advantage of this division of his enemy’s strength to sweep in a dazzling succession of triumphs through Golconda to the Karnataka and back again through Mysore and Bijapur to Raigarh during the fifteen months following December 1675. It was the climax of his career; but the Afridis and the Khattaks made his unbroken success possible.”

Aurangzeb and the Deccan:

Aurangzeb’s attention during the first half of his reign was engrossed in the affairs of the north. Affairs of the Deccan were left in the hands of the governors who had not much difficulty in dealing with the Bijapur and Golconda sultanates as they were decadent. They had not been able to recover from the blows they received from the imperial troops and their weakness was taken advantage of by the rising Marathas whose appearance in the Deccan complicated the political situation in the south and posed a great challenge to the Mughal power.

For the first twenty years of Aurangzeb’s reign his governors in the Deccan could not achieve any success against the sultanates or against the rising Marathas, nor could the Emperor himself realise the full significance of the rise of the Marathas at first.

Abdulla Qutb Shah, sultan of Golconda was as indolent as pleasure-loving. He spent most of his time in the company of women leaving the affairs of the state in the hands of his favorite officers. Abdul Hasan who succeeded him was no better. He also left the administration of the state to his two Brahmin ministers, Madanna and Makkanna. He entered into a defensive alliance with Shivaji promising him an annual subsidy of five lakhs of rupees. Bijapur was more defiant than Golconda and imperial troops had to be sent against it several times. Aurangzeb, as soon as he emerged successful in the war of succession turned his attention towards the Deccan.

Aurangzeb sent Jai Singh of Jaipur (1665) to chastise Bijapur for violating the terms of 1657. Jai Singh was also instructed to subdue Shivaji. Jai Singh first dealt with Shivaji and compelled him to surrender the fort of Purandar and forced Shivaji to accept the treaty of Purandar in June, 1665 by which he had to give up twenty-three forts and extensive lands, and to become a Mughal vassal, and promised a contingent of 5,000 horses.

Jai Singh persuaded Shivaji to go to Agra where he was received by Aurangzeb, but

refused to be treated as a mansabdar of 5,000 horses; Shivaji refused to comply with the etiquette of the imperial court and demanded respect due to a sovereign prince. Shivaji, consequently was kept under surveillance from which he managed to escape with his son, with the connivance of Ram Singh, a son of Jai Singh, returned to his country after many adventures, in December, 1666, after an absence of nine months.

Next year Jai Singh died (1667) in the Deccan having been poisoned by his son Kirat Singh. Aurangzeb was glad that Jai Singh was dead, for he felt he had now greater liberty in pursuing his policy of persecution. "He availed himself of the liberty so gained by destroying the large temple at Mathura."

Raja Jaswant Singh of Marwar (Jodhpur) now took over Jai Singh's position in the Deccan where he had served before. But his previous experience and assistance received from Prince Muazzam did not help him to make any improvement in the situation for the imperialists. Both Jaswant Singh and Prince Muazzam accepted large sums of money from Shivaji and refrained from taking effective steps against him.

On the contrary they persuaded Aurangzeb to confer on Shivaji the title of Raja (1667), Next two years were devoted by Shivaji in organising his internal government and in 1670 resumed active hostilities against the Mughals and Chauth was realised from certain parts of Khandesh.

Smith says that "*we may date the first imposition of Maratha on a province immediately subject to the Mughals.*" This was indeed a conclusive proof of the feebleness of Aurangzeb's government even early in his reign. In October, 1670 Shivaji pillaged the city of Surat although was not able to damage the European factories. He also conquered Ramnagar and Jawhar.

At Raigarh, Shivaji celebrated his formal coronation as an independent Chatrapati on June 16, 1674. He then conquered Karnataka and a part of Mysore, helped Sidi Masud, regent of Bijapur against the Mughals (1678). Soon after he fell ill and died on April 14, 1680.

Death of Shivaji did not mean any improvement in the imperial position in the Deccan. Prince Akbar fled and took shelter with Shambhuji and an alliance between "disturber of India" (Akbar) and the "infernal son of an infernal father" (Shambhuji) as Aurangzeb termed these two, called for a change in Aurangzeb's Deccan policy.

He now personally marched toward, the Deccan leaving Ajmer (1681) after having patched up a peace with Mewar. He reached Burhampur in November 1681 and Ahmadnagar early in 1682. "*His mind must have been full of high hopes, and he could*

not foresee that destiny was dragging him to the south to dig the graves of himself and his empire." From 1682 to 1685 were spent in vain pursuit of Prince Akbar and although a few of the Maratha forts had been conquered by the imperial forces the sturdy Marathas could not be suppressed.

Aurangzeb's policy towards the Deccan sultanates was guided by both imperialist interest and religious consideration. Siege of Bijapur which had been in decadence due to internal dissensions began in 1685 and Aurangzeb arrived there in person in 1686. The garrison held out gallantly and it was not until lack of provisions, and huge toll taken by pestilence and famine of countless men and horses that it surrendered to the Mughals and the Adil Shahi dynasty came to an end.

Aurangzeb entered the **city of Bijapur** in triumph and perpetrated the act of vandalism by destroying all the fine paintings and frescoes of Sikandar Shah's palace. Bijapur not only lost its independence but was left a desolate and plundered city. *"A few years later Bhimsen noticed how the city and its equally large suburb Nauraspur looked deserted and ruined, the population was scattered, and even the water-supply in the city-wells had suddenly grown scanty."*

Next, Aurangzeb turned his attention to the **Qutb Shahi kingdom of Golconda** which had enjoyed immunity from Mughal attacks for the past thirty years during which the Sultan paid the tributes regularly. Predominance of Hindu influence at Golconda and its alliance with Shambhuji were particularly offensive to Aurangzeb.

The immediate cause of hostility between **Golconda** and the Mughals was the interception of a letter of Abdul Hasan to his agent in the Mughal camp in which he called Aurangzeb "a mean minded coward for attacking a helpless young orphan like Sikandar Adil Shah" and mentioned that he would render military support to Bijapur.

This letter infuriated Aurangzeb who at once dispatched Prince Shah Alam to invade Hyderabad (July, 1685). The Prince was held up at Malkhed by a Golconda army and attained no success. Soon after, Mir Muhammad Ibrahim, the commander-in-chief of Golconda army was bribed to join the Mughals.

The Sultan Abul Hasan thus betrayed, fled from the Golconda fort, Hyderabad was captured by Shah Alam. Abul Hasan had to submit and was pardoned on condition of surrendering Malkhed and Seram, to dismiss his Hindu ministers Madanna and Akkanna and to pay an indemnity of one crore twenty lakhs of rupees. But independent Golconda was by itself an offence in Aurangzeb's scheme of things. He, therefore, resumed operation against Abul Hasan after conquest of Bijapur and himself appeared before Golconda early in 1687. The fort was besieged but it held out valiantly for about eight

months.

Prince Shah Alam in the meantime accepted presents from the Sultan Abul Hasan and was about to get him pardoned. Aurangzeb got information about the secret negotiations between Abul Hasan and the Prince and put the latter with his family under arrest and confiscated his property. Aurangzeb now pressed the siege but due to rains and lack of provisions the Mughal army could not make much impression.

On the contrary the chief of the Mughal artillery Chairat Khan and some other high military officers of the Mughals were taken prisoners by the Golconda troops. Aurangzeb ordered three mines to be dug under the bastions of the fort but when ignited these were misdirected and killed 1,100 Mughal troops.

Now, Aurangzeb following the example of Akbar at Asirgarh had resort to bribery and through the treachery of one Abdullah Pani an Afghan soldier of fortune employed in the service of Abul Hasan got the main gate of the fort thrown open to the Mughals. The only Golconda officer who spurned Aurangzeb's tempting offer of money and fought valiantly in defence of the fort was Abur.

Razzaq Lari till he fell down after receiving as many as seventy wounds on his person. He was nursed to recovery by the Mughals and given a high rank in the imperial service. Abul Hasan was sent to Daulatabad fortress with a pension of Rs. 50,000 a year and Golconda was annexed to the Mughal Empire (1687).

We have seen that Aurangzeb's earlier attempt to conquer the two Deccan Sultanates was prevented by the intervention of Dara Shukoh and Jahanara. But Aurangzeb imperialistic policy and religious bigotry would not tolerate independent Sultanates of the Deccan. According to Dr. Smith, Elphinstone and others, the annihilation of the Southern Sultanates was an impolitic step on the part of Aurangzeb.

Extinction of these Sultanates, "freed the Maratha chief from any fear of local rivalry" which could have been used by the Mughal Emperor to his advantage against the Marathas. But historians have doubted if the decadent Deccan Sultanates would be in a position to check the rise of Marathas.

Sir J. N. Sarkar observes that "since Akbar had crossed the Vindhya, the Deccan Sultanates could never forget that the sleepless aim of the Mughal Emperors was the final extinction and annexation of all their territories." It is, therefore, idle to speculate that if the Deccan Sultanates were allowed to exist they would serve as good opposition to the rise of the Marathas.

In the extinction of the Deccan Sultanates Aurangzeb's policy of imperialistic expansion towards the south and subduing the Shiahhs was successful. His other policy remained yet to be fulfilled, namely the subjugation of the Marathas. His attempt at suppression of the renascent Maratha power met with initial success and in 1689 (March 11) Shambhuji was executed at Raigarh, the Maratha capital which was captured by the Mughals.

Rajaram, brother of Shambhuji managed to escape, but Shambhuji's son, Shahu and the rest of his family were taken captives by Aurangzeb. Next, the imperial authority was extended further south and the Hindu states of Tanjore and Trichinopoly were made to agree to pay tributes to the Emperor.

By 1690 Aurangzeb's empire comprised whole of India from Kabul to Chittagong and from Kashmir to Kaveri. Insofar as the expansion was concerned, Aurangzeb was at the Zenith of the Empire. *"All seemed to have been gained by Aurangzeb now, but in reality all was lost. It was the beginning of his end. The saddest and most hopeless chapter of his life was now opened."*

The vastness of the empire precluded its being ruled from one common centre and by one man. Recalcitrant forces raised their heads everywhere throughout the empire. Lawlessness, rebellions, disorder and confusion reigned in many places which the corrupt officials of the state could not control. The chiefs, the Zaminders defied local authorities; the province of Agra especially became the scene of disorder and disobedience.

Learning decayed, treasury was exhausted due to the prolonged Deccan war, Emperor's absence from capital in the Deccan for long years through the whole of northern India in disorder. The army in arrear of pay for long mutinied. Murshid Quli the diwan of Bengal sent the revenue of Bengal to the centre which was the only source of income. It the "Spanish Ulcer" had ruined Napoleon Bonaparte I, it was the "Deccan Ulcer" that ruined Aurangzeb. The Marathas recovered their losses by 1691 and began a national resistance.

Aurangzeb and Rajputs, Marathas

Aurangzeb in his lack of statesmanship and too much regard for religious bigotry failed to realise the value of the alliance of the Rajput's who had previously contributed to the expansion and strength of the Empire. He introduced a radical change in the policy of the state towards them.

So long as Jai Singh of Amber and Jaswant Singh of Marwar were alive Aurangzeb was

not feeling completely free to put his religious policy' into effect. Death of Jai Singh in the Deccan in 1667 was a matter of public rejoicings to Aurangzeb. This removed a powerful leader of Rajput opposition to Aurangzeb's policy.

Aurangzeb suspected, Jaswant Singh of Marwar formerly a partisan of Dara Shukoh, might stand forth as the leader of the Rajput opposition. This apart, Aurangzeb had in his mind the conquest of Marwar very much necessary for the empire, as it occupied a strategically important position both from the military and commercial points of view. Soon an opportunity to give effect to his designs against Marwar arose.

Raja Jaswant Singh died in 1678 at Jamrud while serving as the commander of the Mughal posts in the Khyber pass and the Peshawar district. Immediately on the death of Jaswant Singh Aurangzeb brought Marwar under Mughal rule and appointed his own officers as Faujdar, Qiladar, Kotwal and Amin. On the same day he imposed Jizya on the Hindus.

The Rathors shocked and thrown into confusion at the sudden death of their Raja failed to rally a national resistance and a grand-nephew of Jaswant Singh— Indra Singh Rathor, the chief of Nagor got himself recognised as the Rana of Jodhpur on payment of thirty six lakhs of rupees as succession fee. He was only a phantom ruler, surrounded by Mughal officers. Aurangzeb's designs on Marwar thus seemed to have crowned with success.

Aurangzeb's hopes of quiet rule over Marwar was belied soon, for every Rajput family now became determined to undo what Aurangzeb had done to Marwar. In February 1679 two posthumous sons of Jaswant were born to two Ranis, at Lahore. One of the two died the other, Ajit Singh survived. The loyal followers of Jaswant Singh took the child to Delhi and appealed to Aurangzeb to recognise him as the successor of Jaswant Singh.

The Emperor offered to bring up the child in his harem. It is also said that the throne of Jodhpur was offered to Ajit Singh provided he would accept Islam. This wounded the religious susceptibilities of the Rajputs who preferred to lay their lives down rather than to allow the child of Jaswant Singh embrace Islam. At this critical hour of the Rathor national life Durgadas the son of Jaswant Singh's Minister Askaran, took up the leadership of the Rathors and a new chapter in the Mughal-Rajput hostilities began.

Durgadas rescued the Ranis and child Ajit Singh and when an imperial force was sent to seize the Ranis and the child, a band of Rajputs defying death fell upon the Mughal troops and in the prevailing confusion rode away with the Ranis disguised in male attire and reached Marwar. Baffled in his designs Aurangzeb substituted a milkman's son in

place of Ajit and proclaimed that Durgadas' protege was an imposter.

In Marwar the People rose in rebellion against the Mughal oppressors. Aurangzeb sent Prince Akbar to re-conquer Marwar, who after prolonged warfare captured the country, plundered the towns, destroyed the temples. The Rathors fled to take shelter in the hills and deserts.

Aurangzeb's next target was Mewar. He ordered Maharana Raj Singh to pay Jizya for his entire state. Raj Singh did not miss the real intention of Aurangzeb which was nothing less to extirpate the Rajput states, and he at once decided to join hands with Durgadas in the cause of Ajit Singh of Marwar.

With Rathor-Sisodia alliance the Rajput war assumed the character of a national rising in defence of liberty. Aurangzeb forestalled Maharana's designs by sending 7000 of his chosen troops under Hasan Ali Khan to invade Mewar. Raj Singh fled his capital Udaipur and took shelter in the hills with all his subjects, considering it unwise to face the superior strength of the Mughals.

The Mughal troops easily occupied Chitor and Udaipur. The Emperor, now sure of success, placed Prince Akbar in charge of Chitor and left for Ajmer. Now the Mughals had their disillusionment. The Rajput's fell upon the Mughals as guerilla troops and did havoc to the Mughal outposts.

The command of Mughal outposts fell vacant as officer after officer declined to undertake the responsibility on one or the other pretext. In early 1680 the Rajputs surprised the Mughal army under Prince Akbar and carried off their provisions, reducing the Mughal army to starvation. Aurangzeb got infuriated at Prince Akbar and handed over the command of Chitor to Prince Azam and ordered Akbar to go to Marwar.

Prince Akbar took it as an insult thought of entering into an alliance with the Rajputs whose worth he had sufficiently realised during his war with them. The Rajput chiefs also pointed out to him how the faulty policy of his father was destroying the stability of the Empire and hoping to "place a truly national king on the throne of Delhi, they promised to back him with the armed strength of the two greatest Rajput clans, the Sisodias and the Rathors."

With 70,000 strong army which included the best blood of Rajputana, Akbar arrived near Rajputana in 1681 (Jan. 15). Aurangzeb's army was at that time separated in two divisions one in Chitor and the other at Rajsamudra Lake. Akbar instead of taking advantage of this critical situation of Aurangzeb's army deployment wasted his time before attacking the imperial force. Aurangzeb resorted to a stratagem and wrote a

letter to his rebellious son contriving it so as to fall into the hand of the Rajputs.

The purpose of the letter led the Rajputs desert Prince Akbar, suspecting treachery. The Rajputs soon after discovered the fraud and the Rathor hero Durgadas chivalrously saved the Prince from his father's wrath and escorted him through Khandesh and Baglana to the court of the Maratha King Shambhuji. But Shambhuji an unworthy successor of Shivaji could little afford to help the Prince in realising his dream of an Empire based on Hindu-Muslim unity and reconciliation. After a few years Akbar left for Persia where his death occurred in 1704.

Prince Akbar's rebellion and the support that was rendered initially by the Rajputs to his cause, at least had one advantage. Temporary success of the Mughals was largely set off by the loss sustained by them due to the guerilla action of the Rajputs. Sufferings of the Mughals had been considerable and Aurangzeb thought it would be wise to enter into a treaty with Jay Singh, son and successor of Raj Singh in 1681 by which the Mughals withdrew from Mewar and Jay Singh ceded a few districts in lieu of Jizya.

Marwar continued to fight the Mughals thirty years more. Under Durgadas leadership the Rathors ceaselessly harassed the Mughals and the Mughal officers of some outposts were compelled to pay Chauth to their unrelenting foe to save themselves from their aggression. The war went on unabated till Aurangzeb's death in 1707 and it was his son and successor Bahadur Shah I that recognised Ajit Singh as the Rana of Marwar in 1709.

Like the Deccan policy, the Rajput policy of Aurangzeb also produced disastrous consequences for the Mughal Empire. Loss of life, loss of money in the Rajputana desert did not bring any lasting benefit to the Empire. The imperial prestige was lost and added to this was the huge material loss to the empire. "It was an act of political un-wisdom on the part of Aurangzeb to provoke the Rajput hostility and thus forfeit the devoted service of gallant chiefs and soldiers, so long friends of the empire..... "

Religious Policy of Aurangzeb:

At the very outset it has to be clearly understood that religion with Aurangzeb was no pretense and his religious policy was not influenced by any consideration of worldly gains. He was a devout Sunni Muslim and a champion of Sunni orthodoxy which prompted him to strictly enforce the Quranic laws according to which, to his mind, every pious Muslim must carry on Jihad i.e. holy war against dar- ul-harb i.e. the lands of the non-Muslims till they were turned into dar-ul-Islam i.e. realm of Islam.

Aurangzeb's narrow bigotry made him taciturn and extremely puritanic in his temperament and took steps to translate his own ideas of morose seriousness of life conforming to punctilious orthodoxy. He issued several ordinances to make the Muslims conform to the orthodox rules of conduct prescribed by the Quran. He prohibited the practice of inscribing the Kalima on the coins. Observance of the Persian New Year's Day (Nauroj) was discontinued as, to his mind, it was un-Islamic.

He appointed Muhtasibs or censors of Public morals in every important town and city to enforce Quranic law and to see to it that drinking, gambling and prostitution etc. were effectively put down. Muhtasibs were also to see that the Muslims said their five daily prayers and kept Ramadan or Ramzan. They were empowered to punish those who were guilty of heresy or blasphemy.

Aurangzeb prohibited cultivation of bhang throughout the empire. He simplified the customary celebrations on his birthday and the day of his coronation. In the eleventh year of his reign Aurangzeb discontinued the practice of appearing before the people from the balcony of the palace every morning to receive their salutation. He also prohibited music in the court and dismissed the old musicians and singers. But secret practice of music went on despite the imperial prohibition and it was only in the imperial court and in prominent towns that the order forbidding music could be put into effect. Aurangzeb's puritanism led him to discard the practice of weighing him in gold and silver on birthdays and to dismiss the astrologers of the court.

Aurangzeb did not hesitate to punish the Sufis because of their liberal religious views bordering on pantheism. Sarmad who was a close associate of Dara was put to death by Aurangzeb on charge of apostasy. Many converts to Islam who were suspected of having reverted to their original faith were killed under orders of Aurangzeb. Likewise many Shiah were beheaded as they denounced the first three Caliphs. Aurangzeb ruthlessly persecuted the Ismailia and Bohra sects of Gujarat.

Aurangzeb did not stop by issuing religious orders and ordinances for others, in fact, he practiced "what he professed and sought to enforce on others. He was above the contemporary vices and kept himself clean of all that had a remote touch of irreligiosity or immorality. To the devout Muslims he was a "dervish born in purple", he was venerated as a living saint, a Zinda Pir.

From the official guide book of the reign of Aurangzeb, we come to know that he prohibited the practice of Suttee (1633), but from the accounts of the European travellers of the time we learn that this prohibitive order was seldom obeyed.

In 1679 Aurangzeb issued farman reimposing Jizya on the non-Muslims. The

inauguration of a new religious policy with regard to important sections of the people made a deep adverse reaction on the minds of the people affected by his regulations and ordinances.

Without denying the Emperor the credit of being a conscientious and sincere exponent of the faith he professed, it must be mentioned that his over zealousness made him oblivious of the composite character of the people over whom destiny had placed him to rule, not a homogenous people but a population that included diverse religious traditions and ideals that needed tact, understanding, friendliness and equality of treatment to be won over. But Aurangzeb made the colossal mistake of identifying his personal religion with the state of which he was the head and that had the ruinous effect of generating a feeling of discontent among different sections of the people which even during his life time distracted his energies and was the major cause of the decline and fall of the Empire which Babur and Akbar had built up.

Aurangzeb's Administration:

Aurangzeb's administration was a centralised personal despotism where every minister took orders from the Emperor into whose hands all authority was concentrated. In his despotic control over the administration he could only be compared with European contemporary Louis XIV, king of France.

Aurangzeb was, like Louis XIV of France, was his own prime minister and would never share counsel with any of his ministers or officers. The policy of the government and the principles administration were all determined by him personally. He was extremely industrious and looked into the minutest details of administration. He personally went through the petitions submitted to him and either dictated orders or himself wrote them.

There was an element of suspicion in Aurangzeb's excluding all his ministers and officers in initiating or formulating plans or policies of the government. He could not reconcile himself to the presence of rival authority within the state or in the administration and was even suspicious of superior intellect.

Aurangzeb took punctilious care to see that rules of etiquette and royal prerogatives were observed and not transgressed by anybody. For instance Prince Muazzam was taken to task for saying prayers by putting up canvas screen which was only the imperial prerogative. Likewise when he was informed that Ibrahim Khan governor of Bengal held his court by sitting on a couch while the Qazi, diwan etc. were sitting on the farash i.e. floor, Aurangzeb caused a sarcastic letter to be written to the governor that if

his illness precluded his sitting on the floor with others he would better soon get him medically treated.

The system of administration under Aurangzeb remained substantially the same as in the days of Akbar or his immediate predecessors. But too much concentration of power in the hands of the emperor resulted in great administrative degeneration and helplessness. Aurangzeb canalized his political, administrative, economic in one word, every effort to convert India into a Muslim state. The result was that he effected a great change in the manner, principle and the spirit in which his predecessors had worked the instrument of the government.

In the latter years of Aurangzeb's reign the total number of subahs of the Mughal empire numbered twenty one. Under Akbar the number was fifteen. From the reign of Aurangzeb must be dated the wide extension of farming of revenues, an inordinate increase in the revenue demand which compelled the peasants to flee their land or resort to passive resistance.

According to' Sir Jadunath Sarkar the revenue of the empire under Aurangzeb amounted to 33 crores and 85 lakhs of rupees. Besides land revenue other principal sources of revenue were Zakat or tithe payable by the Muslims, Jizya or a poll tax payable by all Hindus, a salt tax, customs duties, income from the mint and spoils of war.

Aurangzeb, immediately on assumption of the imperial throne had abolished certain taxes and cesses which were realised above the legally payable taxes. Aurangzeb allowed the system of revenue assessment and revenue collection introduced by Raja Todar Mai under Akbar, to fall into disuse and introduced the system of revenue farming that is allowing contractors, that is, the middleman, to realise revenue from the peasants, instead of entrusting the state officers to do so under the supervision of the state government.

The revenue farmers would be required to pay a stipulated amount to the imperial treasury and the balance after meeting the expenses of collection would be enjoyed by them. Foreign trade did not constitute an important source of revenue to the state under Aurangzeb. Agriculture and manufacture of cotton piece goods and cloth were the occupations of most of the people and the items of export were mainly indigo and cotton goods.

Imports were mainly horses from Persia, spices from the Dutch India, wine, glass ware and curiosities from European countries, superior king of tobacco from America and slaves from Abyssinia. Considered by the total amount of customs duties collected during Aurangzeb's reign in a year, of only 30 lakhs of rupees, it is easy to realise that

the volume of foreign trade was small.

Dr. Smith observes that under Aurangzeb *"The army which made a brave show on paper or in camp, was of little military value."* He agrees with Manucci's remark that *"30,000 good European soldiers could sweep away the imperial authority and occupy the whole empire."* Sir Jadunath's estimate of Aurangzeb's total force as in 1674 was: cavalry 2,00,000 mansabdars 8,000, ahdis and barqandazes 7,000, troops under princes, nobles and mansabdars, 40,000 infantry armed with muskets and guns.

During the Deccan war the number was further increased. The expenditure for the army under Aurangzeb was twice as much as under Shah Jahan and its efficiency was not half as much as under Akbar. The navy was also utterly inefficient.

Aurangzeb and the Nobility:

The organisation of the nobility under the Mughals was one of the most important institutions devised by them, upon whom depended in a very large measure the functioning of the administrative system, due discharge of civil and military as well as political functions of the state.

The Mughal nobility in its institutionalized form has a long history of evolution. The nobility played an extremely important part in the founding, expansion, and consolidation of the Mughal empire during the latter half of sixteenth and the first half of eighteenth century.

Before Akbar the nobility had no definite organisation. Under the Sultanate period the Zamindars were not included in the list of nobility and therefore, the Hindus had nothing to do with what was known as "nobility" during that period. It was under Humayun that an elaborate classification of the nobles was made and the nobility was divided into three classes or sections, each section subdivided into twelve grades. We have no definite information as to the order of precedence of the different sections.

Under Akbar we find the famous mansabdari system was given a definite form and order and a number of new elements were introduced into it. It will be a mistake to suppose that Akbar was first to introduce mansabdari system. In fact the system was not entirely new. It had long existed in rudiments. Akbar institutionalised it giving it a definition and form. Akbar classified the mansabs, i.e. the nobles on the basis of the number of the sarwars to be maintained by them. The lowest rank was of 10 and the highest 5,000 sarwars.

Soon, however, mansab became an index of rank and official status and salary received

not connected with the actual number of sarwars maintained by a mansabdar. For instance, mansabdars of 1,000 and above were called amirs. At times even mansabs below 500 or less were also regarded as amirs, although generally speaking only higher mansabs carried the name of amir with them. Zamindars and small mansabdars formed separate groups. Subdivisions of mansabs or the ranks of mansabs might be increased. For instance Akbar raised the highest mansab from 5,000 to 7,000 and later to 8,000.

The Mughals did not show any ethnic preference in admitting persons of different racial origin into its nobility. Hence it included Iranis, Turanis, Uzbegs, and even Afghans. The descendants of the earlier Muslim immigrants from western and central Asia and the Indian converts to Islam also found place in the Mughal nobility.

Akbar's mansabdari system was an attempt to weld the heterogeneous elements of the Mughal nobility into a harmonious whole. Akbar was wise enough to recognise the position of the Rajputs rulers and chiefs in the Hindu society and gave them a special position in the imperial service. The actual number of the Rajputs included in the nobility was not very large but inclusion of gifted individuals like Jai Singh, Man Singh, Jaswant Singh etc. benefitted both the Mughals and the Rajputs.

With the expansion of the empire in the Deccan the Mughal imperialism lacking its essential humanism and generosity as also its high sense of purpose as under Akbar, allowed religious and sectarian differences to affect the nobles. It appears that from 1666 Aurangzeb began to adopt a policy, if not directly opposed to, certainly was different in spirit from his predecessors with regard to the nobility. Consistently with his emphasis on the Islamic character of the Empire Aurangzeb began to follow a discriminatory policy towards the Hindus coupled with an attempt to associate Muslim orthodoxy as closely as possible to the Empire.

Muslim divines were called upon to support his every political action and in this he went so far as to provoke protest from the saner section of the nobility. Mahabat Khan expressed his surprise at the Emperor's policy in the late 70s that he termed his action in a letter as making "fowls into captives and sparrows into huntsmen. The experienced and the able officers of the state are deprived of all trust and confidence while full reliance is placed on hypocritical mystics and empty headed scholars. Since these men are selling their knowledge and manners for the company of kings, to rely upon them was neither in accordance with the divinely prescribed path, nor suited to the ways of the world. Thus these men are robbers in every way. The country is being laid waste; the army disheartened; the peasantry ravaged; the lowly crying of distress; the higher ones seeking to raise disturbances. (As the saying is) the finances are given over

to the Qazi and the Qazi is satisfied only with bribes.”

According to Manucci all the high-placed and important men at the court opposed themselves to this measure. They besought the king most humbly to refrain. Aurangzeb in pursuance of his new policy of military orthodoxy offered the jagirs of the Rajputs to his Muslim nobility in order to rally it more firmly behind the throne. On the whole his policy succeeded in consolidating his position against the Rathors and rebellious Prince Akbar due to the indifference of the rest of the Rajputs, at least temporarily, although in the long run his Rajput policy proved harmful for the Empire.

In northern India Mughal conquests had been quickly consolidated, but not so in the Deccan due to, among other causes, the peculiar attitude of the Muslim nobility towards the question of the annexation of the Deccan. According to Bernier the failure of the Mughals to annex Bijapur was largely due to the langour with which every general conducted the operation and availed themselves of every pretext of prolongation of war which was alike the source of their emolument and dignity. Both Bernier and Fryer called “Deccan, the Bread of the military men”.

Owing to constant ravages of war the Deccan had suffered heavily in its economic resources which were progressively diminishing. Mughal nobles who were posted in the Deccan, therefore, found it difficult, to raise enough revenue to maintain their contingents and ceased to be militarily superior to their Deccan opponents. Circumstanced as this, the Mughal generals inevitably were in collusion with the Deccanis.

Mahabat Khan too seems to have done the same thing. From Khafi Khan, we know that his cynicism about Aurangzeb’s efforts in the Deccan was revealed in a report to the Emperor’s suggestion that it was necessary to crush Shivaji. Mahabat Khan reported that there was no need to send any army to the Deccan only a Fatwa of the Qazi would suffice. In 1671 report reached the Emperor that Mahabat Khan had entered into an alliance with Shivaji and was not exerting himself against the Marathas whereupon he was replaced by Bahadur Khan.

In the war against Golconda the Persian nobles were suspected of sympathizing with Qutb Shah as the latter was a Shiah as themselves. But during the twenty five years from 1682 to 1707 Aurangzeb remained in the Deccan and in the first part of this period he succeeded in smashing three centres of political power, namely, Bijapur, Golconda and capturing and executing Shambhuji.

He declared his war against the Marathas as a Jihad i.e. a holy war. The long drawn Deccan war created a profound political crisis to which the nobles did not remain

indifferent. The noble of the old families were against influx of the Deccan nobles into Mughal nobility and sought to revive their former power and prestige as well as their dominant position.

Other nobles desired an agreement with the Marathas, so that both parties might live in peace in the Deccan or alternatively the return of the Emperor to north India leaving the Deccan war to subordinate military officers. But all these suggestions were indignantly spurned by Aurangzeb and the nobles carried on the Deccan war in a half-hearted fashion requiring personal presence of Aurangzeb in the Deccan imperative. The Deccani and Hyderabad nobles who had been taken in the Mughal nobility recently caused great damage to the imperial cause in the Deccan.

In such circumstances intrigues in the imperial court and mutual jealousies and pursuit of selfish ends went on freely. For instance Tarbiyat Khan was jealous of Fathullah Khan. Muqarrab Khan who captured Shambhuji could not be given promotion by the Emperor due to the stiff opposition of other nobles. There was rivalry between Sayyid Lashkar Khan and Zulfiqr Khan.

In this atmosphere surcharged with suspicion, cliques and factious quarrels groups of nobles pulling in different directions was inevitable. Every noble and every group looked to its own interest. The princes, Kings, governors and generals began to follow their own lines of policy with a view to securing success of their own designs. Important groups among the great nobles naturally arose and typified the new factionalism in the Mughal court.

The Irani, Turani and Hindustani groups of nobles by their jealousies, rivalries and factionalism indicated the serious political crisis that the Mughal Empire was to face in the immediate future. The factionalism among the nobles while revealed their internal contradictions also showed their lack of confidence in the Emperor and the imperial policy and above all in the ability of the Emperor to reduce them to order and discipline.

Defects of weak law of Succession:

In a monarchical system of despotic nature as the Mughal rule had been, the future, i.e. the prospects and promotions of all officers depended directly or indirectly on the approbation of Emperor. It was the court towards which the eyes of all nobles were turned.

Towards the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign and early in the eighteenth century two groups of nobles came into forefront in the court. We have seen that the descendants of the earlier immigrants from Western and Central Asia as also the Indian converts into

Islam found place in the Mughal nobility which therefore, comprised Iranis, Turanis, Uzbegs, Afghans and the Indian converts into Islam known as Hindustani nobles. Under Aurangzeb the Hindu nobility—Rajput's or the Marathas had been excluded.

The two groups that came into the forefront from towards the latter part of the seventeenth century in the imperial court were the Irani and Turani parties. The leading figures of the first party were Asad Khan and his son Zulfiqar Khan. This family belonged to a well known family of Iran. Asad Khan's father had migrated to India towards the end of Jahangir's reign.

Asad Khan whose original name was Muhammad Ibrahim was a favourite of Emperor Shah Jahan and married the daughter of Asaf Khan. He was also a great favourite of Aurangzeb and in 1669 was made the wazir. He took part in the siege of Bijapur, in Rajput campaign and in the capture of Golconda. He was promoted to the rank of mansab of wazirat which meant that he was entitled to sit on a mansab in presence of the Emperor, and made a mansabdar of 7,000. Asad Khan's son Zulfiqar Khan made his mark by commanding the Mughal Troops in the capture of Jinji from the Marathas. His services were recognised by Aurangzeb by promoting him to the position of Mir Bakshi in 1702.

When Aurangzeb died in 1707, Asad Khan was the Wazir while his son Zulfiqar Khan was Mir Bakshi two top posts under the state. Besides Zulfiqar was a great general and had Daud Khan Panni, Rao Dalpat Bundela and Rao Ram Singh Hara as his staunch supporters.

The second party, namely the Turani party was led by Ghazi-ud-din Firuz Jang, his sons Chin Qilich Khan (Later Nizam-ul-Mulk) and Hamid Khan, and his cousin Muhammad Amin Khan. Father of Firuz Jang, Khwaja Abid had migrated to India from Bukhara towards the end of the reign of Shah Jahan. Khwaja Abid took part in the war against Dara Shukoh, Shuja and Jaswant Singh and was made Sadr-i-Kul. He died at the siege of Golconda in 1687.

Chin Qilich Khan participated in the early campaigns of his father. In 1699 he was appointed governor of Bijapur. His half-brother Hamid Khan also served under his father Firuz Jang. Amin Khan, cousin of Chin Qilich Khan came to India in 1687 and served under Firuz Jang, and earned a name as a valiant warrior. He was appointed by Aurangzeb as Sadr in recognition of his merit.

As this group came from Turan this party was known as Turani party and the Turanis formed a large part of their following. There was greater solidarity in this party than in the Irani party. But cold relation between Firuz Jang and Chin Qilich Khan and the

blindness that developed in the former became a serious weakness of this party.

Between the Irani and the Turani Parties there had been a sense of competition and rivalry from the very beginning and each was vying with the other for the royal favour. Particularly the rivalry between the two younger nobles of the two parties—Zulfiqar Khan and Chin Qilich Khan soon turned into mutual jealousy and naturally the two did not get on well together.

The third party known as Hindustani party comprised the Muslims born in India although their forefathers had come from outside. This party had supporters among the Jats Rajputs and many Hindu lords. According to Prof. Satish Chandra the general assumption that the parties and politics at the Mughal court were based on ethnic or religious groupings among the nobility is not borne out by facts.

The groups which were formed towards the end of the reign of Aurangzeb were essentially based on family relations and personal affiliations and interests. "Hence it would appear" remarks Prof. Chandra "that the slogans of race and religion were raised by individual nobles only to suit their convenience, and that the actual groupings cut across ethnic and religious divisions."

Defects of Mughal Nobility of Mughal Empire

(a) Decline of the power and prestige of the Emperor due to Aurangzeb's failure to deal effectively with the oppositions of the Marathas, Rajputs, Jat etc. and the wars of succession after the death of Aurangzeb and every one of his successors,

(b) Absence of competent ruler after Aurangzeb,

(c) System of the grant of jagirs steadily worsened, grant of jagirs was unnecessarily delayed, discrepancies in the income of the jagirs shown and the actual income received, grant of jagir exceeding the total amount of Khas land,

(d) Scramble for the best and the most profitable jagir among the nobles,

(e) Competition between different parties for leading position in the court, particularly by securing the posts of the Wazir and the Mir Bakshi,

(f) Lack of mutual trust between the parties and individual nobles at the court.

It must be particularly pointed out that the struggle for the wazirat was no less a struggle for implementing of policies. The question of the attitude to be taken towards the Rajputs, Marathas, Jats etc., the status of the Hindus and imposition of jizya became issues of party politics. Factually the question was whether the state was to

rest on racist and religious foundations and on Muslims alone or on Hindu-Muslim loyalty and allegiance in a spirit of secularism.

For a quarter of a century to follow, the rivalries and jealousies of the three parties, particularly the Iranis and the Turanis, as also conflict of personalities and their struggle to clear the way to the supreme power constituted the main historical theme.

Success and Failure of Aurangzeb:

It has become more or less fashionable to acclaim any heterodox view about any historical personality of his doings, whether it stands to reason or not. There is a section of writers who have been at pains to prove that Aurangzeb was not a religious bigot and in fact he made liberal grants to Hindu temples and wherever he had destroyed Hindu temples this was necessitated by the exigencies of war.

This view is a laboured view unrelated to historical facts and so palpably incorrect that one need not have to refute it. It should, however, be made clear in order to avoid confusion that there, were instances of bestowal of grants of lands on a few priests or their temples, but these grants were in the nature of renewal or confirmation of the grants made by his predecessors or made with the purpose to win the grantees over to his side. Hence these were not instances of liberality but strokes of diplomacy.

Further, to contend that the destruction of Hindu temples was only a measure of wartime necessity is a pure and simple invention unsupported by any historical evidence. History is respecter of no person and it is based on truth and nothing but truth Sir Jadunath Sarkar in his History of Aurangzeb (5 vols.) has given us a correct win the grantees over to his side. Hence these were not instances of liberality but strokes of diplomacy. Further, to contend that the destruction of Hindu temples was only a measure of wartime necessity is a pure and simple invention unsupported by any historical evidence. History is respecter of no person and it is based on truth and nothing but truth.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar in his History of Aurangzeb (5 vols.) has given us a correct balanced picture of the personality and character of Aurangzeb and it is doubtful if modern researches will be capable of altering the conclusions drawn by Sir J. N. Sarkar about Aurangzeb.

Aurangzeb's private life was above the contemporary vices and unquestionably ideal. He was an indefatigable worker, of disciplined habits, and methodical in his ways. He had a few wives but never did he transgress the Quranic injunction of having more than four wives at a time. His food habits were simple and did not touch wine. He had

acquired proficiency in Arabic and Persian and could speak Turki and Hindi with ease.

He inherited the scholarly temper of his house and lover of books and patron of scholars. In matters of religion he was a bigot, strictly adhering to Quranic law, saying his daily prayers five times a day and kept Ramzan. Too much regard for religiosity made him taciturn, puritanic and intolerant not only of Hinduism but also of Shiahism.

He enforced Jizya on the non- Hindus. All this earned for him the reverence of the devout Muslims. The chief defects of his character were his obstinacy, over-ambition, narrow religious bigotry, unfilial attitude to his father and his betrayal and inhuman treatment of his brothers. Yet he was not a parricide.

Khafi Khan also tries to draw a balanced picture of the character and personality of Aurangzeb and while calling him the most distinguished sovereign of Delhi for devotion, austerity and justice, he criticises him for his intense suspiciousness and lack of trust in any body. His reliance on mere cunning as the principal instrument of statecraft was born of the smallness of his mind. As a soldier and a general, Aurangzeb ranked with Babur and Akbar. He possessed great physical strength, coolness of temperament and great courage.

Success and Failure:

When we judge Aurangzeb as a sovereign, his failure more than set off his success. To judge the measures of his success and failure as also his policy is rather perplexing. The manner of his securing accession to the throne was nothing new in the tradition of the Muslim history in India and his success in the war of succession was more in the nature of the survival of the fittest and if he would have lost some one of his other brothers would seize the throne.

His military campaign showed him to be not only a capable soldier but also a general of great ability who knew how to thwart his enemy by diplomacy and stratagem. He possessed a wonderful memory and remembered every detail of the administration and issued orders to his ministers accordingly.

He was a past-master in diplomacy and statecraft. He was of indefatigable energy and went through the petitions of the people himself and passed orders on them. Gemelli-Careri, an Italian physician who visited India during Aurangzeb's reign saw the Emperor when he was seventy five years old (1695) and "admired to see him endorse the

petitions with his own hand without spectacles and by his cheerful, smiling countenance seemed to be extremely pleased with the employment.

Yet with all the vitality, strength and physical fitness Aurangzeb proved a failure as a sovereign, for he failed to realise that the greatness of India depended on the unity, as well as the progress of the people of India as a whole. The lessons of the past history of India, that political progress and permanence of the state in India depended on the policy of religious toleration and the ability and the foresight in the ruler to create a sense of harmony and unity among the various discordant elements, were lost on him.

Further, despite his intelligence and shrewdness Aurangzeb failed to devise a correct policy to meet an emergency or even to meet the normal legislative needs of the empire. His study of political problems as well as remedies that he sought to devise were coloured by religious prejudices which naturally vitiated the measures taken by him. Little did he realise that more than eighty percent of the population of the empire was non-Muslims and to make things worse he systematically persecuted the Muslims of the Shiah, Ismaili, Daudi and Bohra communities.

Aurangzeb's over-confidence in his industry, strength and ability which generated a distrust and suspicion of officers in his mind led to a policy of holding all local officers in strict, perpetual tutelage produced administrative degeneration, lack of initiative, sense of responsibility and efficiency in the administration.

One of the major causes of Aurangzeb's failure was the alienation of the sympathy and friendship of the Rajputs who played so important a part in the expansion and organisation of the Mughal Empire under Aurangzeb's predecessors. This is nicely stated by Mulla Shirin that "The Hindu wields the sword of Islam."

Aurangzeb also had alienated other material elements in the Hindu population such as the Jats, Bundelas, Sikhs and the Marathas who by their rebellions drained the empire of its blood and money, and distracted the Emperor's attention in times of crisis. His long absence in the Deccan threw northern India in disorder and confusion from which it

could not be recovered. Disintegration of the Empire had begun during the latter part of his rule.

So Emperor Aurangzeb lived and died. The famous letters written shortly before his death to his son “express the weariness of a man who lived too long, had failed in cherished plans, and was tormented by morbid fears about his fate in the next world...” Aurangzeb wrote **“My years have gone by profitless. God has been in my heart yet my darkened eyes have not recognised his light..... There is no hope for me in the future..... when I have lost hope in myself, how can I hope in other?”**

Frequently asked questions:

1. Throw light on the expansion policy of Aurangzeb.
2. Discuss the Imperialistic Policy of Aurangzeb. How far was he successful in his policy?
3. Give a brief sketch of Aurangzeb’s administration.
4. Write a short essay on Aurangzeb’s religious policy and how far this policy was responsible for the downfall of Mughal Empire?